

Build Your Bones Throughout Your Life



Women don't have to worry about frail bones until they get older, right? **WRONG!**

Women of all ages need to take steps to keep their bones strong. Unfortunately, millions of women already have or are at risk for osteoporosis (oss-tee-oh-puh-ro-sis). Osteoporosis means that your bones get weak, and you're more likely to break a bone. Because there are no symptoms, you might not know your bones are getting weaker until you break a bone!

A broken bone can really affect a woman's life. It can cause disability, pain, or loss of independence. It can make it harder to do daily activities without help, such as walking. This can make it hard to participate in social activities. It can also cause severe back pain and deformity.

Osteoporosis can happen to any of your bones, but it is most common in the hip, wrist, and spine (also called vertebrae [ver-tuh-bray]). Vertebrae are important because these bones support your body to stand and sit upright. *See the picture on the opposite page.*

Building Strong Bones

Preventing weak bones is easy. No matter how old you are, it is never too late to start! Building strong bones during childhood and adolescence is the best defense against getting osteoporosis later. Building strong bones at a young age will lessen the effects of the natural bone loss that starts around age 30. As you get older, your bones don't make new bone quickly enough to keep up with the bone loss. And after menopause, bone loss increases faster. But there are steps you can take to stop your bones from becoming weak and brittle.

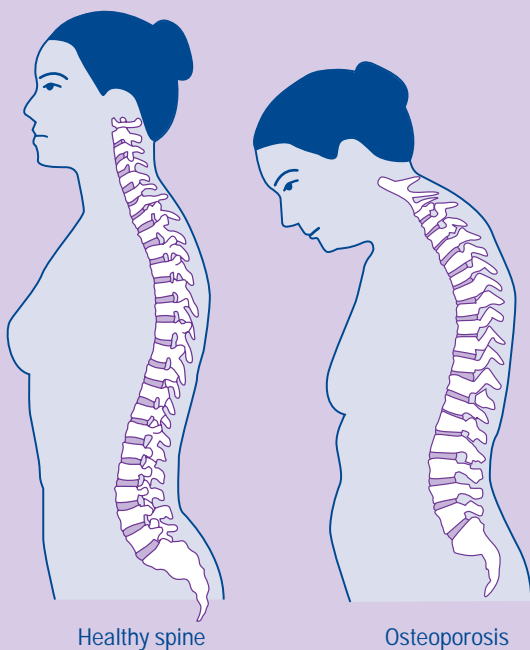
Get your bones tested

There are tests you can get to find out your bone strength, also called bone density. One test is a dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA). A DEXA takes x-rays of your bones. There are also other types of bone strength tests too. Talk with your doctor or nurse about which type of test is best for you.

If you are age 65 and older, you should get a bone density test. If you are between ages 60 and 64, weigh less than 154 pounds, and don't take estrogen, get a bone density test. Don't wait until age 65. You have a higher chance for breaks.



Osteoporosis in the Vertebrae



Osteoporosis in the vertebrae can cause serious problems for women. A fracture in this area occurs from day-to-day activities like climbing stairs, lifting objects, or bending forward.

- Sloping shoulders
- Curve in the back
- Height loss
- Back pain
- Hunched posture
- Protruding abdomen



Get enough calcium each day

Bones are made of calcium. The best way to prevent osteoporosis is to get enough calcium in your diet. You need enough calcium each day for strong bones throughout life. You can get it through foods and/or calcium pills, which you can get at the drug store. Talk with your doctor or nurse before taking calcium pills to see which kind is best for you.

Here's how much calcium you need each day.

Ages	Milligrams per day
9-18	1300
19-50	1000
51 and older	1200

Pregnant or nursing women need the same amount of calcium as other women of the same age.



Here are some foods to help you get the calcium you need. Check the food labels for more information.

Food	Portion	Milligrams	% Daily Value*
Plain, nonfat (or low-fat) yogurt	1 cup	450	45
American cheese	2 ounces	348	35
Milk (fat-free or low-fat)	1 cup	300	30
Orange juice with added calcium	1 cup	300	30
Broccoli, cooked or fresh	1 cup	90	10

*The % daily value tells you how much of the recommended daily amount of that nutrient is in that portion of food. For example, eating 2 ounces of American cheese and 2 cups of milk would be 95% of your daily calcium needs.

Get enough vitamin D each day



It is also important to get enough vitamin D, which helps your body take in calcium. You can get vitamin D through sunlight and foods like milk.

You need 10 to 15 minutes of sunlight to the hands, arms, and face, two to three times a week to get enough vitamin D. The amount of time depends on how sensitive your skin is to light, use of sunscreen, skin color, and pollution. You can also get vitamin D by eating foods rich in vitamin D or in your vitamin pills. It's measured in international units (IU).

Here's how much vitamin D you need each day.

Ages	IU per day
19-50	200
51-70	400
71 and older	600



Although milk is a good source of vitamin D, most yogurts are not.

Read food labels closely.

Here are some foods to help you get the vitamin D you need. Check the food labels for more information.

Food	Portion	IU	% Daily Value
Milk, fat-free, low-fat, reduced-fat, & whole, vitamin D-fortified	1 cup	98	25
Egg (vitamin D is in the yolk)	1 whole	25	6
Pudding (made from mix & vitamin D-fortified milk)	½ cup	50	13



Get moving

Being active really helps your bones by:

- slowing bone loss
- improving muscle strength
- helping your balance

Do weight-bearing physical activity, which is any activity in which your body works against gravity. There are so many things you can do: walk, dance, run, climb stairs, garden, do yoga or tai chi, jog, hike, play tennis, or lift weights—it all helps!

Eat a healthy diet

Other nutrients, like vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, and zinc, as well as protein, help build strong bones too. Milk provides

many of these nutrients. But you can also get these nutrients by eating a healthy diet, including foods that have these nutrients. Some examples are lean meats, fish, green leafy vegetables, and oranges.

Don't smoke

Smoking raises a woman's risk of getting osteoporosis. It damages your bones and lowers the amount of estrogen in your body. Estrogen is a hormone made by your body that can help slow bone loss.

Drink alcohol moderately

If you drink, do not drink more than one alcoholic drink per day. Alcohol can make it harder for your body to use the calcium you take in.

Make your home safe

Reduce your chances of falling by making your home safer. For example, use a rubber bathmat in the shower or tub. Keep your floors free from clutter. Remove throw rugs that cause you to trip. Make sure you have grab bars in the bath or shower.

Think about taking medicines to prevent or treat bone loss

Talk with your doctor or nurse about the risks and benefits of medicines for bone loss.

Teach your daughter early

Making good choices for healthy bones should start in childhood and become



habits that last. Help your daughter build healthy bones. *Powerful Bones. Powerful Girls.*™ is a national education effort to help girls increase the calcium in their diets. The campaign has a user-friendly web site at www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones as well as a new web site for parents at www.cdc.gov/powerfulbones/parents. This site provides parents with the information they need to help their daughters build strong bones during the critical window of bone growth—ages 9 to 12.

Get Sick from Dairy?

If you are lactose intolerant, it can be hard to get enough calcium. Lactose intolerance means the body is not able to easily digest foods that contain lactose, or the sugar that is found in dairy products like milk. Gas, bloating, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and nausea are symptoms you might have. It can start at any age but often begins as we grow older.

People differ in the amounts and types of foods they can handle. For example, one person may have symptoms after drinking a small glass of milk, while another can drink one glass but not two. Others may be able to manage ice cream and aged cheeses, such as cheddar and Swiss, but not other dairy products. People learn through trial and error how much lactose they can handle.

Lactose-reduced and lactose-free products are sold in food stores. There's a great variety, including milk, cheese, and ice cream. Found at the grocery store or drug store, you also can take special pills or liquids before eating to help you digest dairy foods.

You can also eat foods that have calcium added (fortified), like some cereals and orange juice. Also think about taking calcium pills. Talk to your doctor or nurse first to see which one is best for you. Please note: If you have symptoms of lactose intolerance, talk to your doctor or nurse. These symptoms could also be signs of a different, or more serious, illness.

Then and Now

Before the 1990s, we used to think only women got osteoporosis. Now we know that men also have to worry about weak bones. In fact, one in four men older than age 50 will suffer a fracture caused by osteoporosis.